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## Roberts & Wood, INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES: AN ESSAY IN REGULATIVE EPISTEMOLOGY

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But this only makes it more unlikely that regular people are going to be in the epistemic position that for Jordan must constitute the Pascalian's starting point.

In short, Jordan's defeasible evidentialism, though more lenient than some of the alternatives, contains elements that strike me as unrealistic, and this infects his discussion of the epistemic requirements placed on the prospective bettor. Jordan says, and I agree, that pragmatic considerations are instrumental in the lives of many believers. My complaint is that his version of the Wager does not seem to "bridge the gap between the academy and the 'real world'" in the way that he suggests in his preface. Many people tempted by Pascalian arguments, I suspect, do not engage in the sort of evidence weighing and probability assigning that Jordan appears to require. Instead, they find themselves inclined toward belief and seek, for pragmatic reasons, to cultivate it, to make it deeper, to turn it into the sort of conviction that can shape their lives and their characters. Much of what Jordan says in defense of the Wager (and in opposition to too-strong evidentialism and the many-gods objection) could be useful to the believer who desires to turn her mustard-seed faith into something stronger. And that is significant even if Jordan's way of characterizing the initial position of the prospective bettor is not entirely true to life.

*Intellectual Virtues: an Essay in Regulative Epistemology*, by Robert C. Roberts and W. Jay Wood. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007. Pp. x + 329.

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Perhaps the most interesting and fruitful development in recent epistemology has been the renewal of interest in the intellectual virtues. Roberts and Wood's book is a major contribution to this emerging tradition. It is divided into two parts. In the first, the authors discuss the nature of the intellectual virtues in general terms, looking at their importance for epistemology, their relation to the goods of intellectual inquiry, to the practices within which those goods are pursued and to faculties (such as memory, vision and so on). Part Two gives detailed discussions of particular virtues—starting with the Love of Knowledge, and going on to Firmness, Courage and Caution, Humility, Autonomy, Generosity and Practical Wisdom. As the authors say, discussions of virtue epistemology have tended to concentrate on the more general issues they address in Part One, so the detailed analyses in Part Two are an important reason why this book is distinctive.

The first chapter surveys the recent history of thought about the intellectual virtues. Roberts and Wood follow Zagzebski in favouring a rich, broadly Aristotelian account of the intellectual virtues as character traits, rather than Sosa's equation of virtues with properly functioning faculties (p. 7). However, they reject Zagzebski's attempt to use a virtue-based approach to solve the Gettier problem and produce a definition of knowledge (pp. 9–14). There are many things we can know simply through the proper

functioning of our faculties (such as eyesight) in appropriate conditions (as in Plantinga's theory of warrant) without needing rich Aristotelian virtues. However, more substantive intellectual achievements do need the virtues; they cannot be explained just through the essentially mechanical idea of proper functioning (pp. 10–11).

Roberts and Wood proceed from this to a broader critique of modern epistemology's obsession with trying to find necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge, justification etc; and with developing reductive, hierarchical and monistic theories (pp. 23–27). Consistently with this, they do not claim that a focus on the intellectual virtues will solve all the problems of epistemology; but they do hope that such a focus will help to "broaden and humanise the discipline," turning epistemology from an overly technical philosophical specialisation into a matter of live concern for any intellectually serious inquirer (p. 9). In this context, they take up Wolterstorff's distinction between "analytic" and "regulative" epistemology, pointing out that Descartes and Locke, foundationalists though they were, were less concerned to produce a theoretical analysis of knowledge than to provide practically useful guidance to those seeking to pursue intellectual enquiry in a responsible fashion. And Roberts and Wood firmly align themselves with Locke here. "The virtue epistemology of this book is a return to this tradition of the seventeenth century, to a regulative epistemology which, like Locke's, describes the personal dispositions of the agent rather than providing direct rules of epistemic action" (p. 22).

Abandoning the post-Gettier quest for a definition of knowledge, Roberts and Wood look in a broader way than most epistemologists have done at the intellectual goods which the virtues are supposed to lead us towards. These include "understanding" (seeing connections) and "acquaintance" (experiencing something for oneself) as well as propositional knowledge (Warranted/Justified/otherwise well-supported True Belief). And, following Alston, they insist that what makes true belief into knowledge can be very various; "internalist" and "externalist" theories both cover some cases and fail in others. Once again, the Procrustian, one-size-fits-all style of theorising that has dominated so much recent epistemology is firmly rejected. Moreover, Roberts and Wood argue that will and emotion have a crucial part to play in the acquisition of intellectual, as of other, goods (p. 40). And this connects with their refusal to distinguish in any sharp way between intellectual and moral virtues:

If the classical division of theoretical from practical reason is artificial, given the enormous importance of practice in intellectual life, so is the division between intellectual and moral virtues. So all the virtues are intellectual (as well as "moral" and "civic"). The difference between our study and a study in virtue ethics is simply that we are interested in the relation between the virtues and the intellectual goods. (p. 60)

The broad picture that emerges from Part One is as follows: virtues are acquired and consciously cultivated dispositions to do well at activities which are generically human, but also challenging and important. They

are in turn based on and developed out of natural faculties, but those faculties themselves need to be developed and trained, and the virtues are needed for that. Against faculty epistemologists such as Plantinga and Sosa, Roberts and Wood argue that what is epistemologically important is not just the proper functioning of faculties in an environment, but their integration into the character of an intellectually virtuous epistemic agent. Such virtues are exercised in the context of practices in which intellectual goods are pursued; and Roberts and Wood adopt MacIntyre's distinction between goods whose pursuit is internal to a practice (e.g., knowledge, deepened understanding) and those that are external (e.g., money, prestige) (pp. 116–119). Such practices are characteristically social, and the intellectual virtues are very much concerned with the regulation of social relationships (between colleagues, between teacher and pupil, etc) in the context of intellectual practices.

One further theme that is stressed by Roberts and Wood is that different world-views will generate different lists of virtues. For if one's understanding of the virtues is tied up with one's understanding of what human flourishing consists in, then differences in the latter will result in differences in the former. Roberts and Wood do not think that our understanding of the good intellectual life can be separated off from our understanding of the good life more generally, so the intellectual virtues cannot be wholly insulated. They do recognise that, while, for instance, the status of Christian faith as a virtue is highly controversial, "we can probably count on far more cross-outlook agreement that being inquirers and passers-on of knowledge and understanding to and from one another are generic features of our human nature and situation" and therefore come to more agreement on the virtues needed to flourish as such inquirers and passers-on (p. 66). However, there are limits even here. For instance, Roberts and Wood consider at some length the contrast between the virtues involved in the 'traditional' practice of reading and interpreting texts, and the virtues required for the practice of reading a text according to the principles (or anti-principles) of Derridean deconstruction (pp. 120–130). Here they seem to hover between taking a neutral stance which would see the Derridean approach as a possible practice which can generate its own internal virtues, and a more critical stance, which would assess the Derridean's "virtues" as really vices. (A similar ambivalence is present in their several discussions of Rorty—though their tone tends to be harsher here [pp. 189–191, 226–228, 242].)

Part Two provides the analysis of particular virtues (and therefore vices) which, given their particularism, Roberts and Wood naturally enough regard as "the heart of the book" (p. 59). Recognising that one cannot always make sharp distinctions between different virtues in any case, they largely follow ordinary language in individuating the virtues they discuss (p. 81). They reject any attempt to give necessary and sufficient conditions for the virtues they discuss, so the analysis is an informal one, proceeding in large measure through examples. These are often fascinating and helpful. The intellectual virtue of generosity for instance, is in significant measure explicated through a contrast between the vices displayed by Crick and Watson, and the virtue displayed by Rosalind Franklin, during the quest to discover the structure of DNA (pp. 291–298).

The opening and closing discussions in Part Two are of Love of Knowledge and Practical Wisdom, both of which are said to “pervade the intellectually virtuous life, showing up as a presupposition or necessary background of all the other virtues” (p. 305). Other virtues are seen as rather more specialised or specific. While some virtues, like Love of Knowledge, are intrinsically motivating, others, such as courage, come into play only when one is already motivated to pursue something, and finds obstacles in one’s way. Hence, according to Roberts and Wood, a bad person, pursuing a bad project, can still do so courageously (pp. 217, 309). Unfortunately, though, they don’t make any sharp distinction between, for instance, the courage one might need to face the risk of physical injury in the pursuit of knowledge, and the courage that is needed for one to put deeply held beliefs up to rigorous testing (pp. 221–223). One may display physical courage in all manner of both virtuous and vicious projects, but is strictly intellectual courage (as in the second example) compatible with a lack of intellectually virtuous motivation? One may doubt whether the resolution displayed by someone who is not motivated by the love of knowledge, but who faces up to dangers as he works towards the goal of a Nobel prize, can be called *intellectual* courage at all. Moreover, there seems to be a tension between their treatment of courage and some other virtues as independent of motivation, and their claim that “the most exemplary cases [of intellectual excellence] approximate a unity of the virtues, of the intellectual personality of which the various virtues are really aspects, rather than separable units” (p. 310).

I also have some doubts about Roberts and Wood’s discussion of humility. They take it to be an essentially negative disposition to not be influenced by (primarily) vanity and arrogance. [Humility isn’t an ignorance of one’s own merits, but a lack of concern for the status that they may give one] (p. 239). But I may be concerned, as a matter of justice, that I be given my due, without being un-humble. (As, in a different context, Roberts and Wood actually suggest Rosalind Franklin might have been, had she discovered the surreptitious use Watson and Crick had made of her data, p. 298.) But more fundamentally, and rather curiously, the discussion misses a much deeper and surely crucial sense in which humility is essential for the intellectual life—that an inquirer needs to be humble before the subject matter s/he is investigating. I need to recognise there is a large world out there, about which I am trying to find the truth. (This needs, of course, to be balanced by the virtue of creativity—the recognition that the truth isn’t simply lying around waiting for someone to fall over it.)

In a book as rich and stimulating as this one, there will inevitably be much to disagree about. Part Two is a pioneering exploration in detail of the complex terrain of the intellectual virtues, and what Roberts and Wood have to say about those virtues is fascinating, thought-provoking, and very readable. And their critique of traditional epistemology in Part One, and their call for a reorientation of the discipline towards the regulative and the humanly relevant is enormously valuable. This book is like a draught of fresh air blowing through what have become the overly dusty and confining crannies of epistemology; I hope it has the large influence it deserves.